

North Carolina
State Bureau of Investigation
2011
Methamphetamine Laboratory
Statistics Report



LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON METHAMPHETAMINE ABUSE

North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation

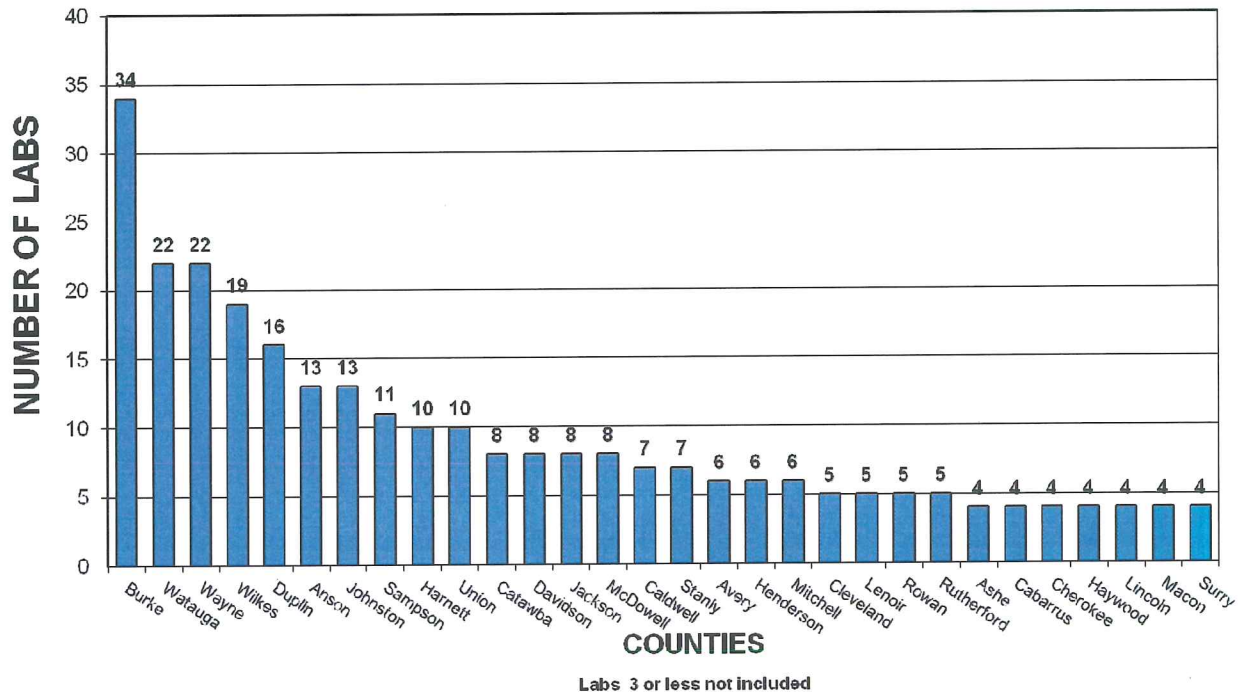
Report on Methamphetamine Laboratories in North Carolina

The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation identified and responded to three hundred forty-four (344) methamphetamine laboratories in North Carolina during calendar year 2011. This is a forty-six percent (46%) increase from the two hundred thirty-five (235) methamphetamine laboratories that were seized during calendar year 2010. The top ten counties in North Carolina that experience methamphetamine laboratory incidents included Burke (34), Watauga (22), Wayne (22), Wilkes (19), Duplin (16), Anson (13), Johnston (13), Sampson (11), Harnett (10), and Union (10).



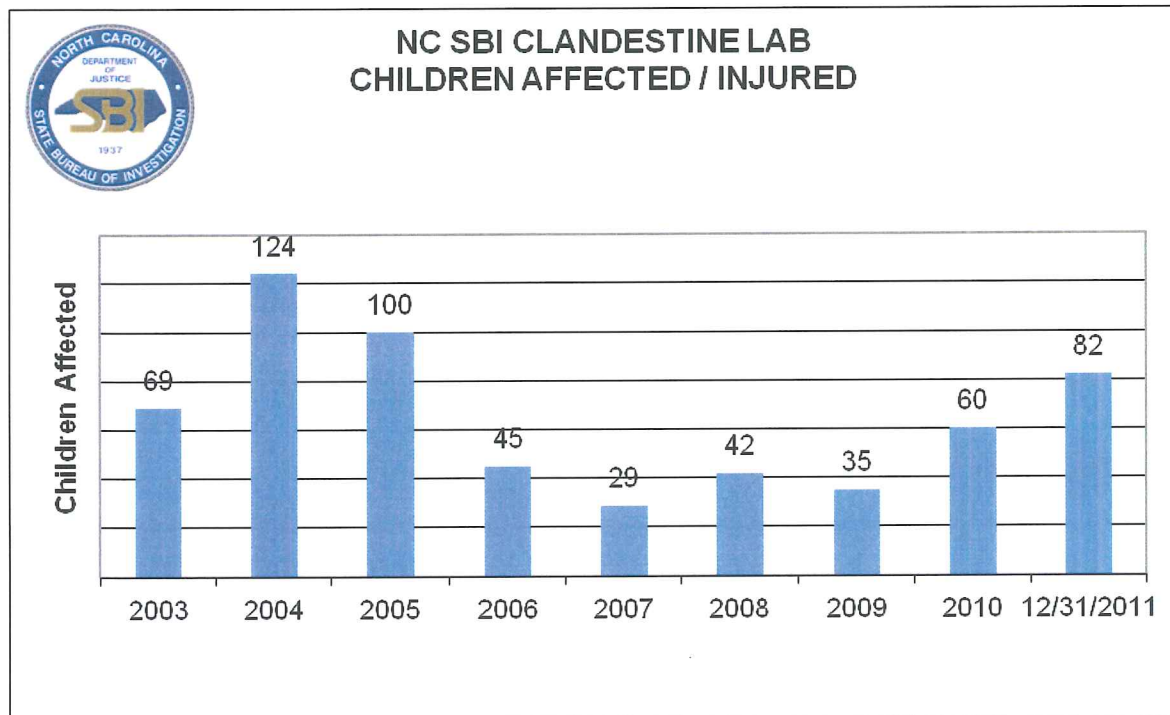
2011 SBI CLANDESTINE LABORATORY RESPONSES

Updated: 12/31/2011



Out of the one hundred (100) counties in North Carolina, Sixty-eight (68) had at least one methamphetamine laboratory incident to occur in their county. The Western counties of North Carolina continue to see the largest percentage of methamphetamine laboratories within their region. Two hundred forty-two (242) methamphetamine laboratories were seized in the fifty most Western counties as compare to one hundred two (102) that were seized in the fifty most Eastern counties.

In 2011, there were eighty-two (82) children found to be living in a residence from which a methamphetamine laboratory was seized. One eleven month old child suffered severe chemical burns as a result of being exposed to the chemicals associated with the manufacturing process. This is a thirty-six (36) percent increase from the sixty (60) children that were found to be living in a residence from which a methamphetamine laboratory was seized in calendar year 2010. While these numbers reflect an upward trend in the number of children found in methamphetamine laboratories, it remains below the one hundred twenty-four (124) children that were discovered in 2004. Awareness efforts related to dangers of methamphetamine production have help to educate parents of the potential health and safety problems.



In 2011, there were fourteen (14) public safety personnel injured while responding to methamphetamine laboratories throughout North Carolina. This is a fifty-five percent increase over the number of public safety personnel injured in 2010.

Trends and Factors Affecting Methamphetamine Production:

There are two key factors that are driving the increase in methamphetamine labs in North Carolina. These are the introduction of the “One Pot” or “Shake and Bake” method of production and the availability of illegally obtained pseudoephedrine products. Currently approximately eighty-five (85%) of the methamphetamine laboratories that are seized in Western and Central North Carolina are using the “One Pot” or “Shake and Bake” method to produce methamphetamine. This trend is also beginning to take hold in Eastern North Carolina with a limited number of “One Pot” labs having been seized. This method allows for the manufacturer to produce smaller amounts of methamphetamine in a single

vessel in a relatively short period of time. These “One Pot” laboratories are very portable and have an increased danger of explosion. A number of these explosions have occurred in North Carolina resulting in serious injury to the laboratory operator.

Over the counter medications that contain pseudoephedrine remains the key source of pseudoephedrine for methamphetamine manufacturing in North Carolina. These products are routinely illegally purchased through the use of false identification at pharmacies. The capacity of any methamphetamine laboratory is only limited by the amount of pseudoephedrine that can be obtained. There is an approximate conversion ratio of ninety percent (90%) from pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine. A technique known as “Smurfing” is being utilized throughout North Carolina and the Nation to obtain large quantities of pseudoephedrine products from pharmacies. Groups of individuals will travel together to numerous pharmacies and make legal limit purchases. They will then combine all the pseudoephedrine in order to produce a larger amount of methamphetamine.

NPLEx System:

North Carolina Session Law 2011-240 passed by the legislature in 2011 requires that pharmacies must electronically submit to the NPLEx system all required information related to the purchase of any over the counter product which contains pseudoephedrine. This system monitors pseudoephedrine purchases to prevent sales that would exceed the purchase limits set forth in G. S. 90-113.5. The system has a stop sale feature which notifies the retailer that the purchase would exceed established limits. The system also has contains an override function that may be used by a dispenser of a pseudoephedrine product who has a reasonable fear of imminent bodily harm if the dispenser does not complete the sale. The system also allows law enforcement to query the system for the identity of those individuals that have made purchases in violation of state and federal law. In January, 2012, the system successfully blocked the sale of 7,224 boxes of pseudoephedrine products which would have exceeded the defined purchase limits. This represents 14, 905 grams of pseudoephedrine that could have potentially been used to manufacture methamphetamine. As of February 1, 2012, eighty-two percent (82%) of all North Carolina pharmacies are utilizing the program, with additional users coming on line daily. The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation is the state administrative agency for the NPLEx system.

Methamphetamine Lab Waste Disposal:

The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation has initiated a Methamphetamine Lab Waste Disposal Container system that will be operational in March, 2012. This program will allow for the disposal of contaminated evidence that has been seized at a methamphetamine lab site and is too hazardous to store at a law enforcement facility. The program is a joint effort with the U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Governors Crime Commission. This program will provide for the disposal of methamphetamine laboratory waste at no cost to state and local law enforcement. The North Carolina State Bureau of investigation has trained state and local officers to assist in the mitigation and over packing of the waste. The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation will transport the mitigated

waste to container sites located throughout North Carolina. The waste will then be collected by a federal waste contractor for proper disposal.

NCSBI Methamphetamine Laboratory Response Personnel Needs:

The SBI responded to 235 clandestine laboratories in 2010, and 344 in 2011, an increase of **46%**. This is a **120%** increase from the low of 157 labs in 2007. The SBI was on pace to work more than 450 laboratories in 2011 before the loss of federal funding for cleanups sharply curtailed the investigation into labs for several months. Through February 10, 2012, the SBI has responded to 62 methamphetamine laboratories as lab responses continue their upward trend. The Clandestine Laboratory Response Program is currently operating with only five site safety agents. In 2007, the program consisted of seven agents.

When the Methamphetamine Lab Waste Container Program becomes operational in March 2012, along with the Nplex system which came on line January 1, 2012, we anticipate a dramatic increase in the number of lab responses. Nplex was initiated on June 18, 2008, in the state of Kentucky, which also has a container program. In 2008 Kentucky had 428 Methamphetamine labs. In 2010 they had 1080 labs, and they responded to more than 1100 labs in 2011.

Another factor driving the increase in labs in North Carolina and across the southeast are the shake and bake or one pot labs. 85% of Methamphetamine labs in central and western North Carolina are one pot or shake and bake labs, and their use is spreading eastward. Based on current and past laboratory numbers, it is projected that the Clandestine Laboratory Response Program will respond to a minimum of 500 labs during 2012.

The State bureau of Investigation is requesting four additional Site Safety agent positions to respond to this increased methamphetamine laboratory volume. Four additional forensic chemist positions are also needed for the State Crime Laboratory to respond to the increased number of labs, take samples of the evidence, analyze the evidence, and render a written report that is invaluable to a successful prosecution. A full time administrative assistant position is also needed in the Clandestine Laboratory Program to handle the increased paperwork and administrative duties associated with the Container Program and increasing Methamphetamine laboratory volume.

One of the most effective law enforcement tools available to combat Methamphetamine labs is the use of Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) and federal conspiracy cases to pursue not only the Methamphetamine manufacturers but also the Pseudoephedrine "smurfers" and others supplying the manufacturers with precursor materials, most importantly Pseudoephedrine. The Nplex system will help identify both those "smurfing" Pseudoephedrine and those purchasing the legal limit to make Methamphetamine. Since 2007, the SBI has initiated and led four federal and OCDETF investigations targeting Methamphetamine manufacturers and Pseudoephedrine "smurfers" across North Carolina.

One investigation was initiated in 2007 and targeted Methamphetamine manufacturers in Davidson and Randolph Counties. Eight Methamphetamine labs were discovered during the course of the

investigation, and 25 individuals pled guilty in federal court to various charges. Sentences ranged from 24 months to 360 months, with six subjects receiving more than 100 month sentences. All told, the defendants received 1875 months in federal prison. On October 22, 2009 an ongoing investigation into a large group of individuals in Johnston, Harnett, and Sampson counties involved in the manufacturing and distribution of Methamphetamine was approved as an OCDETF named "Speed Bump" in conjunction with the Drug Enforcement Administration office in Wilmington. Since the initiation of this investigation, 56 defendants have been federally indicted by the United States Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of North Carolina, and 49 of these defendants have been found guilty. Thirty-nine defendants have been sentenced, and have received sentences ranging from 24 months to 300 months with the average sentence being approximately 137 months. These 56 defendants are responsible for at least 34 methamphetamine laboratories in Sampson, Johnston, Harnett, Cumberland, Wake, Wilson, Nash, and Lee Counties. There have been at least 12 weapons seized from these labs, and 4 children found living in the labs. There are future indictments anticipated in this OCDETF investigation.

Eight additional field agent positions are needed to be primarily charged with the investigation of Methamphetamine Labs and Methamphetamine conspiracy and OCDETF cases. These agents would conduct investigations and also respond to labs to assist the site safety agents when needed. Each agent would work with local officers assigned to assist in the investigations. Every agent in the Clandestine Laboratory Response unit would be sworn to assist on the OCDETF's, and OCDETF reimbursed funds would be utilized to reduce overtime expenditures. Each SBI agent assigned would also be Site Safety certified to assist with methamphetamine laboratories and dump site cleanups during high volume times.

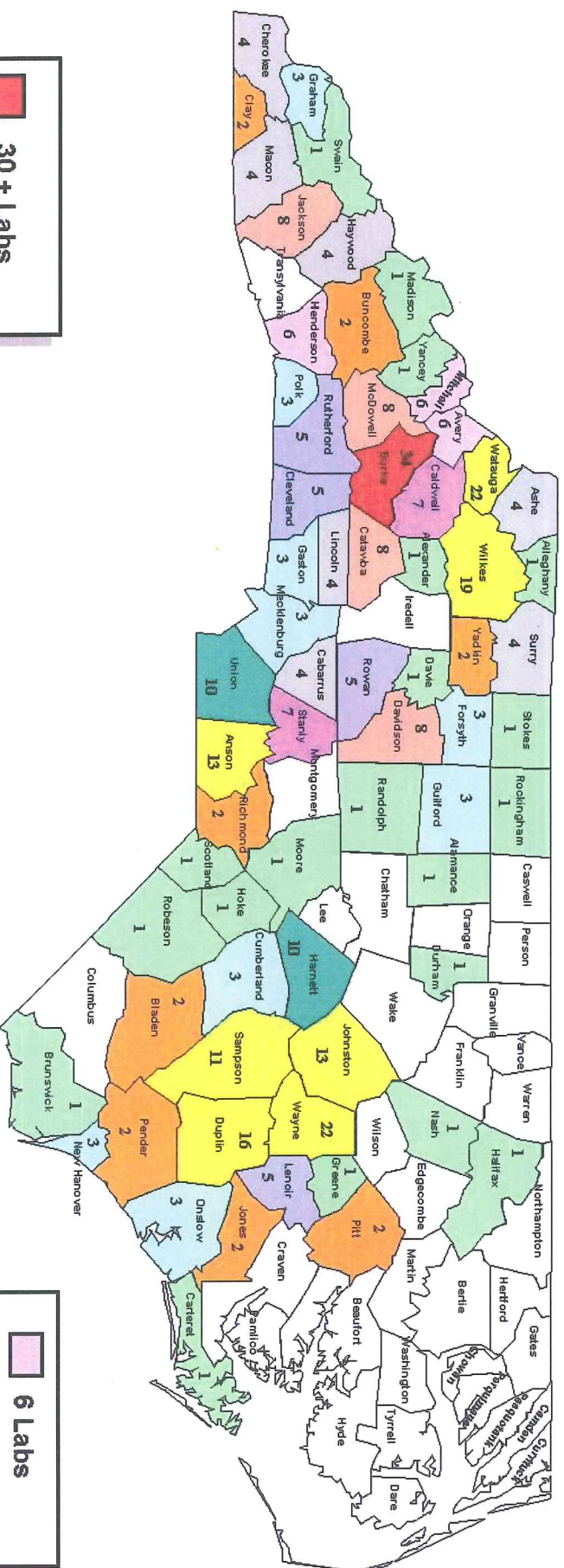
Total personnel request includes four additional site safety agents, four additional forensic chemists, eight additional investigators, and one additional administrative assistant to form a comprehensive investigative team to target Methamphetamine manufacturing in North Carolina and more effectively address the increasing number of Methamphetamine labs in our state.

Attachments: North Carolina State Map of Methamphetamine Laboratory Seizures

2011 Clandestine Lab Responses

Total: 344

(As of December 31, 2011)



North Carolina
State Bureau of Investigation



- 6 Labs
- 5 Labs
- 4 Labs
- 3 Labs
- 2 Labs
- 1 Lab